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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 62nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 21 January 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mrs. BADRAN

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF AUDREY HEPBURN, GOODWILL AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

1. The CHAIRMAN paid tribute to the memory of Audrey Hepburn.

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, the members of the Committee observed a minute of silence.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 11) (CRC/C/3/Add.5)

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mrs. Lakhova, Mrs. Nazmetdinova, Mrs. Krilova, Mrs. Tsarkova, Mrs. Bezlepkina, Mrs. Smirnova and Mr. Makeyev (Russian Federation) took seats at the Committee table.

4. The CHAIRMAN welcomed the delegation of the Russian Federation and said that the Committee had read the initial report of the Russian Federation to the Committee (CRC/C/3/Add.5), which was very informative, analytical and open in describing the problems of children in the Russian Federation.

5. Mrs. LAKHOVA (Russian Federation) said that before presenting the report, she would like to describe the situation in Russia with special reference to its effects on children.

6. Falls in production and living standards were making it increasingly difficult to give children a happy childhood, particularly since the social and economic crisis was exacerbated by the political crisis and inter-ethnic conflicts. Over the previous three years the infant mortality rate had risen, children's health had deteriorated, the number of disabled children had risen, juvenile crime had been on the increase, there had been no decrease in the number of orphans, and it had become considerably more difficult to provide children with toys, books, clothes and food and to encourage their intellectual development. The situation was described more fully in the report but one thing was clear: Russian children had become hostages to the economic reforms taking place. It had become especially important to acknowledge all the problems facing children in order to determine priorities in tackling them.

7. In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Russian Federation was guided by the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the plan of action for its implementation. The fact that the two latter documents had been signed by the President of the Russian Federation as soon as it had become a Member of the United Nations demonstrated the importance accorded by him to the problems faced by children. On 1 June 1992, a presidential-level meeting on the situation of children had taken place in the Russian Federation and, as a result, a decree had been issued on initial measures to give effect to the World Declaration, to serve as a framework for federal and regional policy on children in the 1990s. The decree had been praised by the Executive Director of UNICEF. It had boosted the federal "Children of Russia" programme and encouraged the adoption of the programme at regional level. In accordance with the decree, her Government

had passed a special order on urgent measures to improve the situation of children in the Russian Federation which was in the process of being implemented.

8. The initial report had been prepared by an inter-agency working group of government scientists and specialists using material provided by various parliamentary, federal and non-governmental organizations. It gave an objective assessment of the situation of children in the Russian Federation and of the implementation of the Convention and national legislation on the rights of the child. The report listed the legislation passed in 1990 to 1992 to implement the provisions of the Convention.

9. There were four principal tasks involved in implementing the Convention in the Russian Federation. The fulfilment of those tasks would make the Convention a legally binding and workable instrument for the Government, NGOs and citizens of the Russian Federation.

10. The first task was to bring national legislation into line with the Convention and the World Declaration. Over the previous two years there had been various developments in that connection. The Russian Federation had begun establishing its own legal basis for the protection and development of the child. A single legal area at the legislative level was being created, rather than relying on government and Party resolutions and ministerial instructions as had been the case before. In response to the extreme fluidity of economic circumstances, a great many documents were being produced on child welfare, which unfortunately meant that legislation was constantly evolving. Legislation on children was based on two equally important foundations, first, the new climate promoting the protection of the rights and interests of the child, and secondly, the already existing practical measures in support of children.

11. The legislation concentrated particularly on improving the material well-being of children, improving health care for them, rehabilitating disabled children, supporting pre-school establishments, and protecting the interests of orphans and children deprived of parental care. However, the present legal system for the protection of children was still inadequate, for reasons given in paragraph 14 of the report. That was aggravated by the lack of legal awareness of teachers, parents and the children themselves. More important than legislation was the existence of the social and economic conditions needed to make that legislation a reality.

12. The second task was to adopt administrative and other organizational measures to implement the Convention. Structures specifically designed to deal with the problems of children had been established at all levels of government. For the first time, the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation had set up a Committee on Women's Questions and the Protection of the Family, Mothers and Children. The Russian President had appointed an Adviser on Questions regarding the Family, Mothers and Children, and in November 1992 a new department, the Committee for Social Assistance to the Family and the Child, had been established within the Ministry of Social Services. In most of the territories of the Russian Federation committees (departments) dealing with family and children's problems had been established at the executive and legislative levels to provide local services. There were an increasing number of NGOs dealing with children and mechanisms to facilitate their cooperation with the State were being developed. Her Government readily acknowledged that national mechanisms dealing with children had not yet been completed and did

not fully comply with the aims of the World Declaration and Convention. That task was particularly difficult in the light of frequent changes in the political system.

13. The third important task was to ensure the supply of qualified personnel. Only in December 1991 had a specialist higher education establishment been set up to train social workers of various kinds. Indeed, it had only been in that same year that the profession of social worker had been officially acknowledged. The previous two years had seen the institution of departments to train social workers in universities, teacher training colleges, etc. NGOs were working with the Government to set up a social workers' service.

14. The Russian Academy of Management had opened a Centre for Questions regarding the Family, Mothers and Children. Around 300 specialists had attended seminars at the Centre, where they had thus been acquainted with the Convention and other relevant human rights instruments and programmes. Her Government was trying to conduct a unified policy at the federal and regional levels on those matters.

15. The fourth task concerned research and the provision of other information to assist in the implementation of the Convention. Highly-qualified specialists were currently engaged in working out the principles of a federal family policy and in other research projects. The work was being organized by the above-mentioned Centre and by the Scientific Research Centre for the Social Welfare of Children, the Family and Demographic Policy attached to the Ministry of Social Services. A great deal of work had been planned in order to improve the information and statistics used as basis for State policy on children. In accordance with a resolution of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation on urgent measures regarding population studies and the demographic future of the Russian Federation, financial resources and organizational work had been allocated to improve the performance of State statistics bodies. It was intended to adopt the World Health Organization's method of registering infant mortality, and there were plans to conduct a socio-demographic survey of Russian households in 1994 and a population census in 1999. Reliable and comprehensive statistics were vital to tackling the problems faced by children.

16. Since the report had been submitted in October 1992, it might be useful to outline some events that had taken place since then. NGOs had taken part in conferences, seminars and forums on the rights of the child and the implications of the market for families, women and children, and in discussions on draft legislation relating to the family, parents and children.

17. There were over 100 languages spoken within the Russian Federation but the State language, Russian, was understood by the overwhelming majority of the population. The Republics which made up the Federation had been requested to translate the Convention and the World Declaration into the national languages and that process was still under way. The text of the Convention had been published in all local newspapers and journals for teachers and children. The provisions of the Convention were being explained in regional

television programmes. The Federal Ministry of Education had included a section on the Convention within its course on human rights in the syllabus for the academic year 1992/93.

18. The following legislative measures had been adopted since the submission of the report. One and a half billion roubles had been allocated in the 1993 budget of the Russian President to improving the situation of children in the Russian Federation. A presidential decree had been passed in November 1992 on additional measures to provide social security protection for pregnant women and women with children under the age of three who had been dismissed as the result of the liquidation of enterprises, institutions and organizations. There had also been a presidential decree on initial measures in the field of State youth policy, which provided financial support for children's organizations, and a decree on increases in social security allowances and compensation payments to families with children and other categories of citizens, which doubled all allowances and compensation payments for children. Her Government considered as particularly important the resolution passed by the Supreme Council in December 1992 on urgent measures to regularize the adoption of children who were citizens of the Russian Federation or other States, which limited the adoption of children by foreign citizens to exceptional cases.

19. Attempts had been made to include articles relating to children in all kinds of laws. For instance, the Russian Federation's law on taxes fully exempted enterprises producing baby food from profits tax. Legislation adopted in December on housing provided for the right of orphans to be housed. A resolution passed by the Government of the Russian Federation set the value-added tax on children's goods at 10 per cent (the usual rate was 28 per cent) as of 1 January 1993. In connection with the withdrawal of troops from eastern Europe and elsewhere, a law had been passed containing special guarantees and benefits for the families and children of military personnel in view of the grave problems facing them.

20. Although for 70 years her Government had asserted that children were the only privileged class in the country, only over the past few years had children's problems been openly discussed There was still a great deal to be done before the issues covered by the Convention and the World Declaration became genuine priorities for legislative, executive and judicial bodies at all levels and became an important part of national awareness.

21. The CHAIRMAN thanked the representative of the Russian Federation and observed that the steps taken since the submission of the report were particularly important. She invited the representative of the Russian Federation to give particular attention to those issues relating to general measures of implementation of the Convention, general principles of the Convention and civil rights and freedoms.

22. Mrs. LAKHOVA (Russian Federation) referred members to her opening statement for information on question 1. In reply to question 4, she said that at a governmental meeting in the Russian Federation in December a programme had been adopted for orienting social policy with regard to certain groups, including families with children. The programme had been submitted to the Supreme Council in preparation for the International Year of the Family and had given rise to two bills which were currently under discussion in Parliament, a bill on State allowances for families with children and a bill

on the protection of the family, mothers, fathers and children. Regarding question 5, she again referred members to her opening statement.

23. Concerning question 7, Government expenditure on health care had represented 6.2 per cent of the budget in 1992 and would rise to 8.3 per cent in 1993. The share for education had been 9.6 per cent in 1992 and would be 11 per cent in 1993. In reply to question 8, she said that at the presidential and republic levels, legislation had been adopted governing the allocation of humanitarian assistance to the most disadvantaged groups, i.e. disabled children, children from large families, orphans, children below and of school age, students, pregnant women and children of single mothers. The allocation of such resources was strictly monitored by special governmental committees and NGOs.

24. Turning to question 9 on the list, she noted that the first part had been dealt with in her opening statement. As to the remainder of the question, in the past two years there had been an increase in the number of bodies dealing with children and the family; they included the Russian Children's Fund, the Fund for the Protection of Mothers and Children, and the Union of Russian Women. At the level of the Supreme Council, machinery was being instituted for new NGOs and associations, and the situation of women and children and the role of the NGOs in implementing the Convention were being discussed with the President of the Russian Federation. In addition, Russian newspapers had organized a round table on the implementation of the Convention, which had been attended by representatives of NGOs and the ministries. The draft initial report of the Russian Federation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been discussed by 66 NGOs, many of whose proposals had been taken into account in the final version. The Children's Institute of the Russian Children's Fund had also participated in the drafting of the report.

25. School curricula had been adjusted in 1992 to incorporate the study of human rights, including the rights of the child. The text of the Convention was included in that course of study. Children in the fifth to ninth grades received instruction in civic education, and all general courses in the final grades contained a compulsory human rights component. In addition, teachers had access to an optional course in human rights.

26. With regard to question 11, the report had not been translated into languages other than Russian but it had been sent to the 88 territories of the Russian Federation. A recommendation had been made to local Governments to have the report translated into the national languages.

27. Turning to questions 12 and 15, she said that discrimination against children belonging to minority groups was rare and that no special statistics existed in that respect. In 1992, 20 republics had signed a federal agreement, one of whose goals was to prevent incitement to national hatred. In addition, under the Law on the Rehabilitation of Repressed Peoples, the Government was instituting specific programmes for the return to their homeland of Russian citizens living in other States formerly belonging to the USSR. The programmes included travel allowances, compensation, provision of housing, etc.

28. In reply to question 14, she said there were no directly relevant standard-setting instruments, but the desirability of a child's participation in proceedings was assesed in special cases, in the light of the child's interests. For example, recommendations existed concerning adoption, to the

effect that discussions should be held with both the child and the adoptive parents concerning issues affecting the child. Means for protecting the child's interests were also laid down in criminal legislation. Under article 101 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the court was entitled to remove a minor from a courtroom if facts having a negative impact on him were liable to emerge. The Code also provided for the compulsory participation of the minor's legal representatives in court proceedings.

29. In reply to question 16, she said that as part of the "Children of Russia" programme a fund had been established in aid of children from Chernobyl. In 1992 the programme had focused on orphans, through a decree establishing measures to improve the situation of orphans and children without guardians. At the end of 1992, programmes had been adopted on family planning and disabled children. Financing for the "Children of Russia" programme was projected at 34 billion roubles for 1993, but there were great difficulties in implementing the programme due to credit-related problems.

30. Concerning question 17, children's literature was published in the languages of the smaller ethnic groups by 11 publishing houses at the federal level, and there would soon be possibilities for publication at the regional level. In 1991 and 1992, children's literature had been published in 13 minority languages and school textbooks had been available in 18 different languages. The publication programme of the Ministry of Information and Publishing of the Russian Federation included 20 titles in the minority languages.

31. Replying to question 19, she said that the Church was separate from the State in the Russian Federation. No official statistics were available, but the Supreme Council had formed a committee on religious belief in 1991. A law had been adopted on freedom of religious belief, under which Sunday schools had been opened in the various regions.

32. On question 20, she said the authorities devoted close attention to raising the awareness of the population, including teachers and parents, of the legal and educational literature on the ill-treatment of children. There was an increased number of publications on that subject, including newspapers and magazines at the federal and regional levels. Special significance was attached to the question of protection of the rights of the child by the magazine of the Russian Children's Fund, Semya ("Family"). In addition, problems of ill-treatment of children were discussed on live radio and television broadcasts with the participation of experts in the fields of law, teaching and medicine. At the practical level, children's interests were protected through regular meetings on specific subjects between parents, teachers, doctors, psychologists and experts on the defence of children's rights. All boarding schools had a psychologist on their staff; he or she was responsible for giving assistance to parents and consulting teachers and other staff. The protection of children's rights was included in training programmes for teachers, social workers and staff in all categories. Attitudes towards children were monitored by the relevant bodies, inappropriate attitudes being singled out for disciplinary or criminal proceedings.

33. Turning to question 21, she said that corporal punishment was prohibited in schools and that the criminal legislation provided for disciplinary measures against teachers who violated the professional standards of conduct laid down in the Law on Education. Regarding ill-treatment in the home, the

Code on Marriage and the Family provided for loss of parental authority if it was established that parents were shirking their responsibilities to bring up their children or misusing their parental rights by abusing children or providing a harmful example through moral or antisocial conduct, chronic alcoholism or drug abuse. In addition, a procedure existed whereby children could address the competent national bodies independently in order to protect their interests.

34. In reply to question 22, she said that psychologists, social workers and specialized educators, whose tasks included dealing with the issue of child abuse and neglect, were attached to schools. In addition, courses for teachers at postgraduate institutes covered relevant legal aspects. Special studies on the issue were currently being undertaken within the legal administration, the results of which would be presented to educational, social and State bodies.

35. Concerning question 23, the courts considered all cases of offences against minors to involve aggravating circumstances. The Penal Code laid down punishment for a list of acts of violence perpetrated against children and adolescents; she read out several examples.

36. In reply to question 24, she said there were over 50 psycho-pedagogical rehabilitation centres in the Russian Federation providing assistance to children and adolescents, including 200 consultation offices and confidential telephone lines for children in life-threatening situations. Children in need of rehabilitation were placed in hospitals, sanatoriums, special schools, camps or preventive institutions.

37. In reply to question 34, she said that homes for mothers with children up to three years of age had been established in some labour camps and that persons housed in them generally enjoyed better living conditions than in other parts of the camps. However, there was an awareness that the overall difficulties arising from living conditions in labour camps persisted.

38. Concerning the question of attendance at pre-school institutions, costs for attendance must not be more than 20 per cent of the amount estimated for overall child maintenance, and allowances were provided for children up to the age of six. The decrease in the number of children attending crêche and kindergarten was not therefore solely a result of increasing costs and the matter was being looked into.

39. Mr. HAMMARBERG commended the Russian Federation for its early ratification of the Convention and prompt presentation of its initial report. Despite the problems of political change and the process of transformation, the Russian Federation had carried out impressive work in incorporating the Convention on the Rights of the Child into national legislation and carrying out the necessary administrative changes in order to create a structure to monitor implementation of provisions on the rights of the child. In the light of the comment made by the representative of the Russian Federation concerning the danger of children becoming the hostages of economic reform, it might be relevant to discuss the relationship between economic reform and the situation of children; in a case where society as a whole was in a situation of economic crisis, there was a special likelihood of children suffering. That issue should be discussed specifically against the background of articles 3 and 4 of the Convention. Noting from the report that some social problems had increased over the past year, he urged that warnings should be heeded and

measures taken to ensure that there was a system for monitoring such developments. He stressed the importance of obtaining broad social data - including gender-specific information and data concerning ethnic groups and different social sectors - in the context of article 2 of the Convention, and requested further clarification of that question.

40. The report and introductory statement had been very specific concerning the legislative and structural machinery set up to protect the rights of the child. However, it would also be interesting to know what the real impact of such a system was and how many children were familiar with, and able to put forward ideas about, the Convention. Had their situation in fact really improved? As appropriate mechanisms were already in place, it would be interesting to focus future discussion on the real changes which had been made for the benefit of children. Lastly, concerning question 23, while information had been provided concerning relevant legislation, it would also be useful to know to what extent such legislation was actually used. There were cases where there was a certain reluctance to bring some types of offence to court; indeed, in practice it was relatively rare for cases of ill-treatment of children to be brought to light. He wondered, therefore, to what extent such reluctance had been overcome so that proceedings could be instituted more easily.

41. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said she was pleased to see that such a high-level delegation representing a wide range of the official bodies concerned had accepted the Committee's invitation to attend its meetings. She was also pleased to note the openness and self-criticism expressed by the State party, both in its report and in the introductory statement. And she had noted the extensive range of measures already adopted to ensure that the principles and provisions of the Convention were put into practice.

42. In connection with one particular area of concern which had been raised in the list of issues - that of the increasing number of children suffering from ill-treatment, cruelty and humiliation, she observed that legal measures alone were not sufficient. She had noted that it was intended to strengthen penalties in this respect, but it should be recalled that article 19 placed considerable emphasis on the need for prevention. It might therefore be possible to consider the steps to be taken in order to change attitudes and introduce preventive measures. It would also be interesting to see what role children themselves could play in that respect.

43. Mr. GOMES DA COSTA commended the Russian Federation for its very detailed and complete report and for its openness and self-criticism. He had been pleased to note the efforts of the Russian Government and society to emphasize the rights of the child, despite the country's current economic, political and social situation. The participation of NGOs in the preparation of the report and in the round table on the rights of the child was a very positive factor, as was the effort being made to include information about the Convention in training courses for teachers and in basic education, and generally to increase awareness of the rights of the child.

44. On the question of the participation of NGOs, it would be interesting to have further information on the relations between the Government and such organizations in safeguarding the rights of the child and on any involvement of NGOs in the elaboration of policies. It would also be useful to know whether national NGOs were active in all parts of the Russian Federation. On the matter of training, he would like to know whether the police and other

officials involved in the administration of juvenile justice received training in human rights in general and the rights of the child in particular. In connection with the ill-treatment of children, it would be useful to have information about open telephone lines which children or adults could use to bring offences to light. Noting that the Convention had been widely publicized in the Russian language, he asked whether there were children in the Russian Federation who did not speak Russian and had therefore not been informed about the Convention. On the question of the publication of books for children, he asked whether such books made specific references to the rights of the child and to the Convention. Further information on children, including orphans and disabled children placed in institutions, would be interesting in the context of the right of the child to live with his family and in his community. Further information about the structure and functioning of the system of institutionalization would also be welcome.

45. Mrs. EUFEMIO, noting the efforts made to ensure that personnel dealing with children were trained in the rights of the child, referred to the need to look at the matter from a multidisciplinary angle and the need for coordination among such personnel. Further information, including information on the attitude of personnel dealing with children towards their charges and on the system of personnel evaluation and continuing training, would be of interest, as would information on monitoring machinery in the light of the need, recognized in the State party's report, to identify problems accurately in order to solve them.

46. Miss MASON, noting that it had been mentioned in the introductory statement that legislative provisions for the protection of children had been in existence for some time, asked what new legal norms had been adopted to adjust legislation to the provisions of the Convention. On the question of the definition of the child, and referring to paragraph 45 of the report, she asked whether parental responsibility was taken into account in cases when the age of marriage was under 18. She also asked whether there was provision for legal or medical counselling of children. Paragraph 20 of the report seemed to indicate that there was an unfavourable trend towards increased teenage pregnancies; in that context it would be interesting to know whether relevant courses had been introduced in the school curriculum. Lastly, she requested further clarification concerning sexual offences involving minors.

47. Mgr. BAMBAREN GASTELUMENDI said that he had been impressed by the sincerity of the report and by the enormous efforts being made for children during the transitional period in the Russian Federation. One very large area of concern was the number of children abandoned by their parents. The report spoke of 100,000 children admitted to State centres, and the number was increasing. A full account was given of the services available for child victims of ill-treatment, but he would like to know what kind of facilities were afforded to children who were prosecuted in the courts. In view of the large number of nationalities in the Russian Federation, what was the rule for determining a child's nationality in the civil register? Was it the nationality of the place of birth or of the parents?

48. The CHAIRMAN noted that training in the new discipline of social work had just begun in the Russian Federation. She hoped that the training would not be in the old style, i.e. focused on individual problems, but would also

include training in social action for children, mobilization of communities and the country, and organization of children themselves to participate in the advancement of their own cause.

The meeting was suspended at 12.10 p.m. and resumed at 12.35 p.m.

49. The CHAIRMAN said that the delegation of the Russian Federation would respond later to the questions put by members of the Committee. It would now continue its statement on the formal list of issues.

50. Mrs. LAKHOVA (Russian Federation), responding to question 29 concerning parents giving up their children for adoption, said that the education and health authorities had an obligation to counsel such parents. In practice that work was done by child protection inspectors, social workers and lawyers from children's institutions.

51. Questions 30 and 31 concerned abuses of inter-country adoption procedures and the illicit transfer and non-return of children. Russia's law-enforcement agencies were guided by several articles of the Penal Code, including those concerning kidnapping, bribery and abuse of authority. A number of new measures concerning inter-country adoption had also been introduced. In addition, a letter had been sent to regional authorities specifying the categories of children who might be adopted by foreign citizens in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A list of the documents required for adoption formalities had also been drawn up. A legal-advice agency on the rights of the child had been set up in the Ministry of Education, which coordinated issues of inter-country adoption and supervised adoption agencies. All judicial organs had been instructed to pay special attention to the legality of inter-country adoption. In the event of any abuse, court proceedings were instituted. In December 1992 the Supreme Council had issued a decree regulating adoption by foreign nationals.

52. With regard to guaranteeing children the possibility of maintaining contact with both parents in cases of broken marriages (question 25), articles 52, 53 and 54 of the Code on Marriage and the Family dealt with the rights and obligations of both parents in the upbringing of their children. The regulations applied equally to divorced couples. As a rule, after a divorce the mother and father themselves determined the participation of the absent parent in the child's upbringing. Any dispute was settled by the authorities in the interests of the child, and the Ministry of Education had established a procedure for considering such disputes, including a detailed examination of all the relevant circumstances. If either parent still disputed the arrangements, the issue was decided by the courts. Under earlier legislation, only the child protection authorities could act in such cases, so that the rights of parents and children were restricted. Now either parent could make an application to the courts. Failure to comply with a court ruling was punishable by a fine and could constitute grounds for an application for transfer of custody to the other parent. Parents could appeal against court decisions. In order to prevent judicial errors, such cases received special attention, and efforts were being made to improve the qualifications of judges. Consideration was being given to the introduction of special family courts and local commissions on the protection of the rights of minors.

53. In the event of non-payment of maintenance by an ex-spouse (question 27), the parent having custody of the child received a monthly allowance from the State.

54. Another issue was whether young offenders should be sentenced to imprisonment or returned to their parents' charge. The choice of punishment of such offenders was a matter for the judicial authorities. All the circumstances of a case must be clarified during the court proceedings, with examination of the parents, teachers, documentary evidence, etc. The court must also consider the possibility of a suspended sentence of imprisonment. If the court concluded that a young offender could receive suitable correctional treatment without a criminal sanction, it could impose a sentence of an educational nature.

55. Another question asked how in practice a child could apply to the authorities for protection against cruel parents. The law gave children the right to complain to their teachers or officials at school, or to the educational or judicial authorities. All such authorities were required to look into any complaint and give the children concerned immediate social aid and take action to prosecute any cases of inappropriate treatment.

56. A further issue concerned programmes to change conditions in schools and other children's institutions, and machinery for determining any violation of the rights of children in such places. Programmes were being implemented at the federal and regional levels. There was systematic monitoring by the judicial and other authorities of the conditions under which children were educated and of the actions of administrators and teachers. In the event of any violation of children's rights, the perpetrators were liable to punishment or prosecution.

57. Questions 32 and 41 related to the identification and tracking of disabled children and policies for such children in boarding institutions. The State's policy for disabled persons, including disabled children, had been spelt out more clearly over the past two years. Implementation of the policy was difficult because it required changes in the law and social policy and large-scale expenditure. In addition, it would take several generations to change the attitude of society towards disabled persons.

58. National machinery for helping the disabled was emerging. The Supreme Council had established a special committee to prepare legislation on the question, the President of the Federation was assisted by an adviser and a committee on disabled persons, and several ministries were concerned with the problems of that group. A programme for disabled children adopted at the end of 1992 dealt with medical and social rehabilitation, improvement of education and training facilities, and the establishment of special boarding schools. The possibilities for integration of disabled children in the general education system were limited at present, but a start had been made on the establishment of rehabilitation centres which worked in close collaboration with specialized institutions. One main task of the new programme was to solve practical problems such as the production of apparatus and appliances needed by disabled children.

59. Festivals, exhibitions and sports competitions were held for disabled persons, and for 1993 more than 6 billion roubles had been allocated to programmes for disabled children. An increasing number of NGOs were taking up problems of the disabled, and an important role would be played by the local

family assistance services which were being set up. It should be remembered that the training of social workers had begun only in the past two years. It was hoped that such services would do much to improve the system for identification and tracking of disabled children.

60. Question 33 referred to the high number of deaths in State homes for infants. The infant mortality rate was a collective indicator which depended on many different circumstances, ranging from the health of mothers to the state of the telephone and transport systems. It was difficult to influence the rate in a time of economic crisis.

61. An attempt had been made to establish priorities in efforts to combat infant mortality. In 1993 an international methodology for counting infant deaths was being introduced: the figures would be higher but would reflect the true situation. Pregnant women and infants now received special attention from the social security services; for example, a law had recently been enacted concerning additional measures to protect the mother and child. Furthermore, the programme for the conversion of the defence industry included the establishment of factories to produce, for example, baby food and medical appliances.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.